

## 5. U.S. Department of Agriculture

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USDA is the third-largest civilian Department of the U.S. Government, overseeing a variety of agencies, Government corporations, and other entities that employ more than 95,000 people at over 15,000 locations in all 50 States and 60 countries.

The Department has undergone a historic reorganization to improve coordination among its broad range of programs and agencies. This reorganization, which affects headquarters and field structures, was authorized by the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 (Pub. L. 103-354), signed into law in October 1994.

The reorganization focused the Department's work under the following seven mission areas, which operate over 200 programs. These areas are described in chapters 6-12 of this *Agriculture Fact Book*:

- Rural Development

- Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services

- Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services

- Food Safety

- Natural Resources and Environment

- Research, Education, and Economics, and

- Marketing and Regulatory Programs.

Some organizations serve the entire Department of Agriculture, including all mission areas. Among these are the Assistant Secretary for Administration (Departmental Administration), Office of the Chief Economist, Office of Inspector General, Office of the Chief Financial Officer, Office of the Chief Information Officer, Office of General Counsel, and Office of Communications, all of which report directly to the Secretary of Agriculture. The Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs serves as liaison between the Department and Members of Congress and their staffs, State and local governments, and Indian tribes and their members.

### ■ Departmental Administration

Departmental Administration (DA) provides leadership and guidance to ensure that USDA is managed effectively, efficiently, and fairly in its administrative program and services. The Departmental Administration Staff Offices provide support to policy officials of the Department and overall direction and coordination for the administrative programs and services of the Department. In addition, DA manages the Headquarters Complex and provides direct customer service to Washington, DC, employees.

## Office of Civil Rights

The Office of Civil Rights (CR) provides overall leadership, oversight, direction, and coordination for USDA civil rights and equal employment opportunity programs. CR is responsible for promulgating policies that will increase the participation of women, minorities, and persons with disabilities at all levels in the USDA workforce, and ensure equal opportunity in the delivery of USDA programs and services to all customers without regard to race, gender, national origin, disability, and other protected bases. CR works in collaboration with the USDA mission areas in implementing civil rights laws, regulations, and best practices in both employment and agricultural program delivery areas.

In 1999, CR focused on improving civil rights accountability systems within USDA and is developing policies on accountability, reprisal, and disciplinary and corrective actions. CR also issued departmental regulations on compliance reviews for programs conducted and assisted in the processing of civil rights complaints.

In March 1999, a consent decree was signed to settle the civil rights class action brought against USDA by African American farmers from across the country. The claims filed under the class are now being reviewed and settled.

The backlog of program complaints was substantially reduced through the efforts of the Early Resolution Task Force. Of the 1,088 backlog cases existing in September 1998, only 2 cases remain. The Statute of Limitations (Section 741 of the Omnibus Bill) Project within CR has the responsibility of reviewing program discrimination complaints filed prior to July 1, 1997.

In July 1999, the Director of Civil Rights appointed a Task Force on Sexual Orientation to update the 1994 Task Force Report and to make recommendations to address issues of sexual orientation.

CR continued to work with agencies to develop training modules in civil rights areas including sexual harassment and disability employment. USDA is exploring new technologies to deliver training to USDA employees throughout the United States.

A strong Civil Rights program supports USDA's goals. The Civil Rights program ensures that customers have full access to all USDA programs and activities, that program and equal employment opportunity complaints are handled fairly and expeditiously, and that the best supervisory and management practices are followed so that a diverse staff of USDA employees are highly productive and effective. The Civil Rights program directly supports three of the Department's management initiatives—civil rights, outreach, and human resource management.

## Office of Human Resources Management

The Office of Human Resources Management provides overall direction and leadership for USDA human resources management programs and initiatives. OHRM establishes departmental human resources management policy and represents USDA in governmentwide initiatives. The office develops and administers guidelines, principles, and objectives supporting human resources management, safety

and health management, and labor management partnerships. OHRM provides advice and guidance to USDA mission areas and provides oversight through compliance reviews. This office fully supports the civil rights initiatives of the Department's Office of Civil Rights and provides operational human resources management services for the Office of the Secretary and departmental staff offices.

OHRM manages an employee career management program to assist USDA employees in managing their careers. The program was enhanced in 1998-99 by making available to field employees an on-site 2-day Individual Career Management Workshop. A total of 12 workshop sessions were delivered to field employees at different locations nationwide.

In addition, OHRM administers the Summer Intern Program and 14 other student internships, which employed a total of 5,334 students in 1999. This is an increase of more than 26 percent from the prior year. Of the students employed, 16.8 percent were African American; 10.4 percent, Hispanic; 4.0 percent, Asian; and 3.1 percent, American Indian or Alaska Native. Also included in this group were 35 students with disabilities.

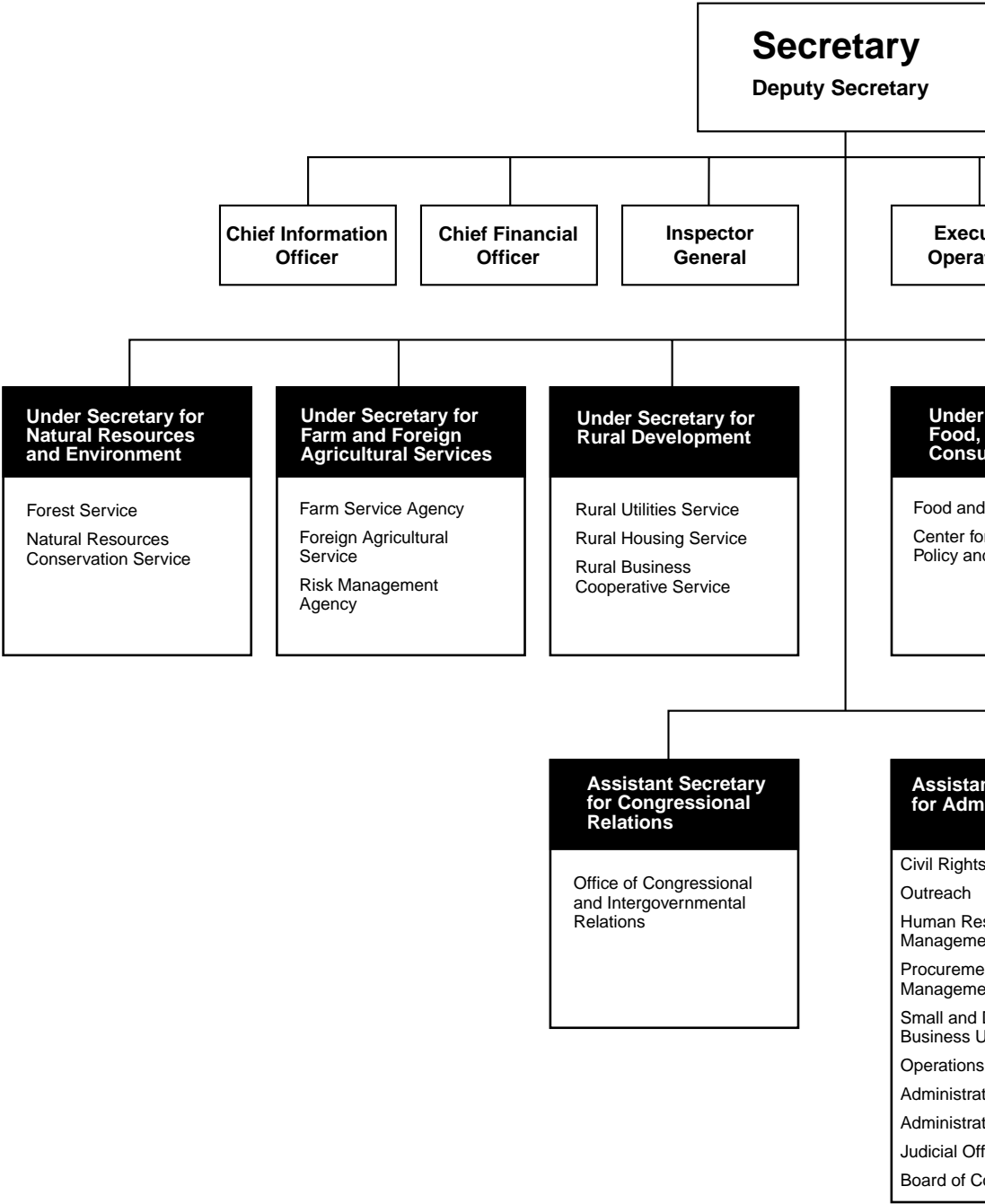
#### Office of Procurement, Property, and Emergency Preparedness

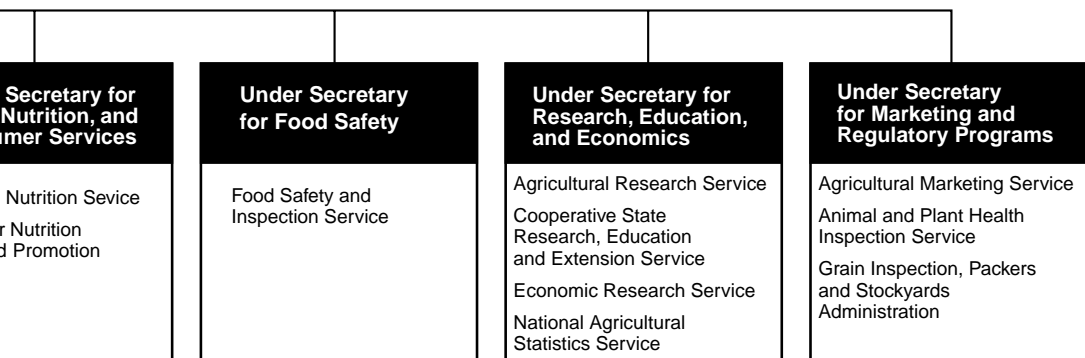
The Office of Procurement, Property, and Emergency Preparedness (OPPEP) provides leadership and policy guidance concerning procurement, property management, energy conservation, disaster management, and coordination of emergency programs. OPPEP also promotes and establishes USDA policy for alternative fuel vehicles, and the purchase of biobased, environmentally preferable, and recycled products.

OPPEP is working to simplify and reduce the cost of procurement, and to improve access to information about procurement and property management policy for businesses and other members of the public. The cost of procurement has been reduced by expanding the use of commercial credit cards (purchase cards) and the Purchase Card Management System to make small purchases. At the end of FY 1998, over 19,000 purchase cards had been issued to qualified holders throughout USDA. OPPEP also introduced a Fleet Card Program so that cardholders may purchase fuel and service for government vehicles. Over 42,000 fleet cards were issued in FY 1998. OPPEP posts USDA procurement and property management policy and procedures on the Departmental Administration web site ([www.usda.gov/da.html](http://www.usda.gov/da.html)). Businesses interested in selling to USDA can view "Doing Business with USDA" at the web site. OPPEP also posts information about disaster relief at this web site.

In October 1998, USDA published in the Federal Register *Uniform Procedures for the Acquisition and Transfer of Excess Personal Property*, in accordance with the provisions of Section 923 of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996. As of June 1999, OPPEP transferred excess personal property worth \$2.1 million to 1994 institutions (tribal), 1890 institutions, and Hispanic-serving institutions.

# U.S. Department of Agriculture Headquarters Organization





1. Administrative Support  
 2. Administrative Law Judges  
 3. Officer  
 4. Contract Appeals

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Table 5-1.

## Number of USDA employees, 1948-99

| <i>Year</i> | <i>Number of<br/>USDA employees</i> | <i>Year</i> | <i>Number of<br/>USDA employees<sup>1</sup></i> |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|-------------|---|
| 1948        | 60,815                              | 1974        | 101,430   |
| 1949        | 63,063                              | 1975        | 103,779   |
| 1950        | 67,560                              | 1976        | 109,276   |
| 1951        | 66,150                              | 1977        | 113,085   |
| 1952        | 62,825                              | 1978        | 118,563   |
| 1953        | 62,492                              | 1979        | 122,809   |
| 1954        | 63,309                              | 1980        | 125,185   |
| 1955        | 64,191                              | 1981        | 117,440   |
| 1956        | 69,423                              | 1982        | 111,853   |
| 1957        | 74,215                              | 1983        | 109,773   |
| 1958        | 77,264                              | 1984        | 108,598   |
| 1959        | 79,998                              | 1985        | 106,665   |
| 1960        | 81,585                              | 1986        | 102,997   |
| 1961        | 85,238                              | 1987        | 102,579   |
| 1962        | 89,168                              | 1988        | 106,552   |
| 1963        | 94,527                              | 1989        | 109,567   |
| 1964        | 94,781                              | 1990        | 110,754   |
| 1965        | 94,548                              | 1991        | 110,357   |
| 1966        | 98,688                              | 1992        | 113,405   |
| 1967        | 102,175                             | 1993        | 112,458   |
| 1968        | 105,628                             | 1994        | 109,830   |
| 1969        | 101,848                             | 1995        | 103,848   |
| 1970        | 100,860                             | 1996        | 100,710   |
| 1971        | 102,698                             | 1997        | 98,457  |
| 1972        | 104,540                             | 1998        | 96,410  |
| 1973        | 104,104                             | 1999        | 95,491  |

<sup>1</sup>Full-time equivalent (FTE). For example, two half-time employees would count as one FTE.

Table 5-2.

## Where do USDA employees work?

| <i>State</i>         | <i>Number of employees*</i> | <i>State</i>   | <i>Number of employees*</i> |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| Alabama              | 1,140                       | Montana        | 2,566                       |
| Alaska               | 851                         | Nebraska       | 1,391                       |
| Arizona              | 1,605                       | Nevada         | 328                         |
| Arkansas             | 1,815                       | New Hampshire  | 279                         |
| California           | 7,162                       | New Jersey     | 518                         |
| Colorado             | 2,531                       | New Mexico     | 1,357                       |
| Connecticut          | 157                         | New York       | 1,067                       |
| Delaware             | 208                         | North Carolina | 1,790                       |
| District of Columbia | 6,559                       | North Dakota   | 750                         |
| Florida              | 1,629                       | Ohio           | 810                         |
| Georgia              | 2,357                       | Oklahoma       | 900                         |
| Hawaii               | 429                         | Oregon         | 4,589                       |
| Idaho                | 2,524                       | Pennsylvania   | 1,444                       |
| Illinois             | 1,513                       | Rhode Island   | 32                          |
| Indiana              | 733                         | South Carolina | 875                         |
| Iowa                 | 1,840                       | South Dakota   | 816                         |
| Kansas               | 1,068                       | Tennessee      | 1,009                       |
| Kentucky             | 1,085                       | Texas          | 3,464                       |
| Louisiana            | 2,867                       | Utah           | 1,438                       |
| Maine                | 240                         | Vermont        | 229                         |
| Maryland             | 3,008                       | Virginia       | 1,977                       |
| Massachusetts        | 336                         | Washington     | 2,256                       |
| Michigan             | 1,105                       | West Virginia  | 659                         |
| Minnesota            | 1,600                       | Wisconsin      | 1,423                       |
| Mississippi          | 1,881                       | Wyoming        | 695                         |
| Missouri             | 3,905                       |                |                             |

| <i>Territory</i>                         | <i>Number of employees*</i> | <i>Territory</i>                 | <i>Number of employees*</i> |
|--|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| American Samoa                           | 6                           | Marshall Islands                 | 1                           |
| Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands | 5                           | Puerto Rico                      | 561                         |
| Guam                                     | 33                          | Trust Territories of the Pacific | 1                           |
|  |                             | U.S. Virgin Islands              | 25                          |

Table 5-2.

Where do USDA employees work? (continued)

| <i>Country</i>                 | <i>Number of employees*</i> | <i>Country</i>       | <i>Number of employees*</i> |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Argentina                      | 3                           | Malaysia             | 1                           |
| Australia                      | 3                           | Mexico               | 17                          |
| Austria                        | 6                           | Morocco              | 1                           |
| Bahamas                        | 1                           | Netherlands          | 3                           |
| Belgium                        | 6                           | New Zealand          | 1                           |
| Bermuda                        | 1                           | Nicaragua            | 2                           |
| Brazil                         | 5                           | Nigeria              | 1                           |
| Bulgaria                       | 1                           | Pakistan             | 1                           |
| Canada                         | 3                           | Panama               | 8                           |
| Chile                          | 3                           | Peru                 | 1                           |
| China                          | 7                           | Philippines          | 2                           |
| Columbia                       | 1                           | Poland               | 2                           |
| Costa Rica                     | 4                           | Republic of Korea    | 2                           |
| Dominican Republic             | 2                           | Republic of Palau    | 3                           |
| Egypt                          | 2                           | Russia               | 6                           |
| Ethiopia                       | 1                           | Saudi Arabia         | 1                           |
| Federated States of Micronesia | 10                          | Singapore            | 1                           |
| France                         | 7                           | South Africa         | 2                           |
| Germany                        | 4                           | Spain                | 2                           |
| Guatemala                      | 5                           | Sweden               | 1                           |
| Haiti                          | 1                           | Switzerland          | 5                           |
| Hong Kong                      | 2                           | Thailand             | 2                           |
| India                          | 1                           | Turkey               | 2                           |
| Indonesia                      | 2                           | Ukraine              | 1                           |
| Italy                          | 4                           | United Arab Emirates | 1                           |
| Ivory Coast                    | 1                           | United Kingdom       | 2                           |
| Jamaica                        | 2                           | Venezuela            | 3                           |
| Japan                          | 10                          | Vietnam              | 1                           |
| Kenya                          | 2                           |                      |                             |

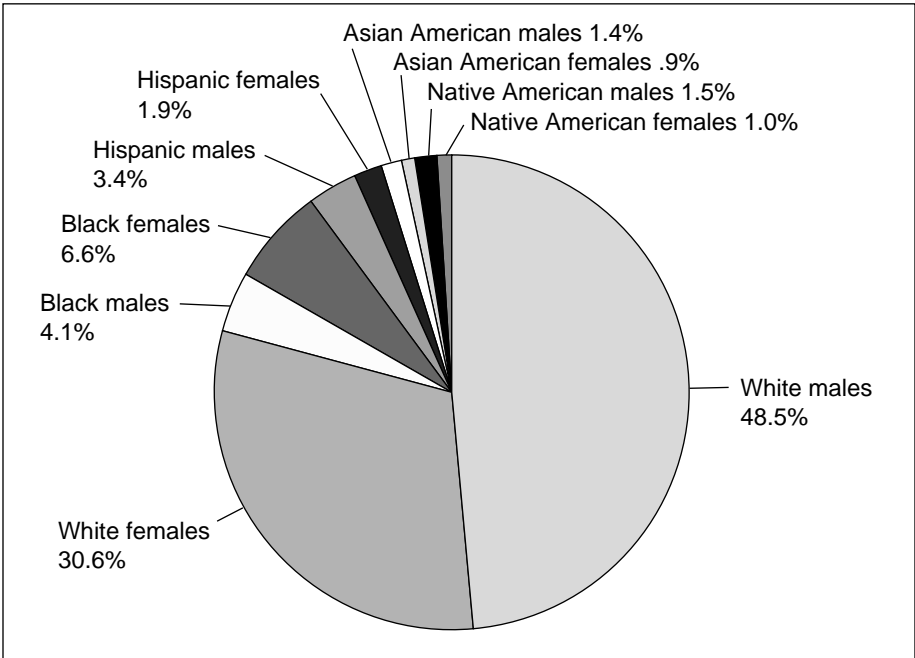
\*Permanent, full-time employees.

■ In 1999, USDA had nearly 1,000 employees with targeted disabilities in permanent full-time positions.



Figure 5-1.

USDA workplace profile by race and gender group, 1999



Office of Operations

**Mail**

Smokey Bear receives more mail than any individual in the Department. Each year, USDA receives over 180 million pieces of mail, and at the Washington, DC, headquarters alone, over 21 million pieces of mail are handled each year—for an average of about 84,000 pieces of mail processed each workday.

The headquarters mail operation is an active employer of people with disabilities. Over one-third of its employees are people with disabilities. Working closely with private and public placement organizations, the division has succeeded in bringing these employees into the work force. In recognition of its success in hiring the disabled, the division has received numerous government and private-sector awards.

The mail center is one of USDA’s reinvention laboratories supporting Vice President Gore’s National Performance Review, in which the Department has taken an active role. One advance is the implementation of computer-assisted mail sorting systems, which will improve efficiency and reduce by at least five the number of employees needed for this staff. Also, USDA is taking the lead in developing governmentwide mail management initiatives that are projected to save over \$2 million.

## **Washington Area Strategic Space Plan**

The Office of Operations continues to work on the Strategic Space Plan which is designed to provide modern, safe, and efficient office space for USDA employees in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area. The George Washington Carver Center in Beltsville, Maryland, was completed last year. This 350,000-square-foot modern office complex provides space for over 1,100 employees. Much of the day-to-day building operation is done by Mellwood, a community rehabilitation, nonprofit organization that provides employment opportunities for persons with severe disabilities.

The George Washington Carver Center includes a telework center. The center will provide 31 work stations for USDA employees under the flexiplace concept or for short-term (3 months or less) task forces involving employees who are on temporary duty assignments in the metro area.

In addition, the first phase of the modernization of the 1.3 million-square-foot USDA South Building is well underway. This nearly 70-year-old building is much in need of renovation. When finished, this project coupled with the George Washington Carver Center will enable USDA agencies in the metro area to move out of more expensive leased space into modern and efficient USDA-managed space.

## **Print on Demand**

The Office of Operations' Consolidated Forms and Publications Distribution Center (CFPDC) and the Mail and Reproduction Division are currently offering Print on Demand services to all user agencies.

Print on Demand is state-of-the-art technology and the wave of the future in modern warehousing and forms management programs. Substantial cost savings in printing and storage costs can be accrued to agencies by utilizing this service. Cut sheets, non-carbon and double-sided forms, pamphlets, and many other printed items no longer need to be stored for future use. Instead, these items are scanned or otherwise inputted onto small optical storage discs, and then hard copies are produced as needed and only in the quantity needed to fill a specific order.

To date, CFPDC has reduced its cut-sheet inventory items by over 10 percent and anticipates that Print on Demand technology will enable further reductions of 20 to 30 percent.

## **Computers for Learning**

The Office of Operations' Centralized Excess Property Operation (CEPO) is an active participant in Vice President Gore's Computers for Learning Initiative. CEPO collects excess/surplus computer equipment from USDA and 17 other Federal agencies in the Washington metropolitan area. Initially, the equipment is offered for reuse by other agricultural agencies. Computer equipment not needed by agencies is tested and, if possible, repaired.

## **Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization**

The Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) provides departmentwide leadership and oversight for implementing and executing Small Business Programs prescribed under Sections 8 and 15 of the Small Business Act of 1958, as amended. It also has implementation responsibilities for Executive Order

(E.O.) 12432, Minority Business Enterprise Development, and E.O. 12138, Women-Owned Business Enterprise Development.

OSDBU develops policy to enhance the utilization of small, minority, and women-owned small businesses in the contract and program opportunities of USDA. It analyzes procurement trends and develops initiatives to improve contract awards to small, minority, and women-owned small businesses. It provides outreach to raise awareness and solicit small business interest in USDA programs, and it monitors and reports the percentage of contract awards by USDA to small, minority, and women-owned businesses.

OSDBU's goal is to provide information, guidance, and technical assistance to ensure continuous growth in the rate of small business participation in USDA programs and procurements.

If you are interested in business opportunities with the Department of Agriculture, visit our web site at [www.usda.gov/da/smallbus.html](http://www.usda.gov/da/smallbus.html) or call (202) 720-7117 for more details.

### Office of Ethics

The Office of Ethics was created in 1998 to direct and coordinate the ethics programs within the various mission areas of the Department and to service headquarters staff directly. The Office develops departmentwide policies and regulations; provides training to USDA staff on the various rules governing employee conduct, conflicts of interest, and political activity; administers personal financial disclosure reporting by senior staff; and counsels employees on these matters. Over the past year, the Office has invested heavily in Internet technology to provide online training modules for USDA staff stationed all over the world, and was the first Federal agency to offer disclosure reporting through a secure online, web-based system. In addition to USDA staff, employees from other Federal agencies and the public have accessed the ethics web site located at [www.usda.gov/ethics](http://www.usda.gov/ethics)

### Office of Outreach

The Office of Outreach provides overall leadership and coordination to assure that all potential customers have full access to all USDA programs and services. In conjunction with other USDA agencies, special emphasis is directed toward underserved populations. The Office administers the Outreach for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers Program, authorized by Section 2501 of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990.

## ■ Office of the Chief Economist

The Office of the Chief Economist advises the Secretary of Agriculture on policies and programs affecting U.S. agriculture and rural areas. This advice includes assessments of USDA program proposals, legislative proposals, and economic developments of importance to agriculture and rural areas. In addition, the Office of the Chief Economist is responsible for several programs, described below, that coordinate activities across USDA agencies.

The World Wide Web address for the Office of the Chief Economist is  
<http://www.usda.gov/oce/>

### World Agricultural Outlook Board

The World Agricultural Outlook Board is USDA's focal point for forecasts and projections of global commodity markets. Each month the Board brings together interagency committees of experts to forecast the supply, use, and prices of major commodities in the United States and abroad. The committees also clear agricultural forecasts published by other USDA agencies. This teamwork ensures that USDA forecasts are objective and consistent.

Because the weather is vital to crop forecasts, specialists from the Board work side by side with weather forecasters from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to monitor the weather and assess its effect on crops. Their work provides timely information on potential changes in global production.

The Board also coordinates departmentwide activity on long-term economic projections, remote sensing, and climate. The Department is one of the largest users of remote sensing in the Federal Government. The Board coordinates remote sensing activities at USDA and chairs the Department's Remote Sensing Coordination Committee. The Board also hosts the Department's Chief Meteorologist, who serves as the principle spokesperson on weather and climate issues and chairs a departmental weather and climate coordinating committee.

The World Wide Web address for the World Agricultural Outlook Board is  
<http://www.usda.gov/oce/waob/index.htm>

### Office of Risk Assessment and Cost-Benefit Analysis

This office is responsible for coordinating, reviewing, and approving all risk assessments and cost-benefit analyses of mitigation measures associated with major regulations of the Department. Major regulations are economically significant (with an impact of at least \$100 million each year) and have a primary effect on human health, human safety, or the environment. The office provides direction to USDA agencies on appropriate methods for these analyses and serves as a focal point on matters relating to risk assessment in interagency reviews.

The World Wide Web address for the Office of Risk Assessment and Cost-Benefit Analysis is <http://www.usda.gov/oce/oracba/index.htm>

### Agricultural Labor Affairs

The coordinator of agricultural labor affairs is responsible for coordinating USDA's agricultural labor policy. Areas of concern include immigration, the H-2A Temporary Agricultural Worker Program, worker protection standards for pesticide use, farm labor supply, and agricultural employment issues.

The World Wide Web address for this office is <http://www.usda.gov/oce/oce/labor-affairs/affairs.htm>

## Sustainable Development

OCE's director of sustainable development works to integrate the principals of sustainable development into the Department's policies and programs, ensuring that economic, social, and environmental considerations are balanced in decisionmaking. The director also directs and coordinates the Department's domestic and international policies and programs in sustainable development, including sustainable agriculture, forestry, and rural communities.

The World Wide Web address for this office is <http://www.usda.gov/oce/osfsd/index.htm>

## Global Change Program Office

Global climate change, whether from natural causes or human activity, could have important consequences for farming, forestry, and rural areas. The Global Change Program Office functions as the USDA-wide coordinator of global change program and policy issues facing the Department. The Office coordinates activities with other agencies, interacts with the legislative branch on climate change issues, and represents USDA in international climate change discussions. It also is a source of objective assessment of the economic effects of climate change and proposed mitigation strategies on agriculture and forestry.

The World Wide Web address for this office is <http://www.usda.gov/oce/oce/gcpo/index.htm>

## Office of Energy Policy and New Uses

The Office of Energy Policy and New Uses assists with development of departmental energy policy and coordination of departmental energy programs and strategies. The Office provides economic analysis on energy policy issues, coordinates USDA energy-related activities within and outside the Department, and studies the feasibility of new uses of agricultural products.

The World Wide Web address for this office is <http://www.usda.gov/oce/oepnu/index.htm>

## ■ Office of Inspector General

USDA's Office of Inspector General (OIG), the first civilian OIG in the Federal Government, was established in 1962 and became fully operational in 1963. OIG conducts and supervises audits and evaluations, as well as investigations and law enforcement efforts relating to USDA's programs and operations. It provides leadership and coordination and recommends policies for activities that will prevent and detect fraud and abuse and promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in USDA programs and operations. Furthermore, OIG keeps the Secretary and Congress fully informed of problems and deficiencies related to administration of USDA programs and operations, and of the actions designed to correct such problems and deficiencies.

During fiscal year 1999, audit and investigative efforts resulted in approximately \$262 million in questioned costs and \$68 million in fines, restitutions, other recoveries, and penalties. Management agreed to put an additional \$114 million to better use and recover more than \$55 million. Investigative efforts resulted in 782 indictments and 560 convictions.

OIG continued work on three Presidential initiatives to improve the efficiency of three USDA programs. A nationwide cooperative effort by OIG and the Rural Housing Service identified over \$4.3 million in misused funds at Rural Rental Housing apartment complexes operated by 20 owners and management agents; 10 cases are under investigation. Schemes included double-charging apartment complexes for management-related expenses and charging apartment complexes for personal expenses of the owner or management agent. In addition, 145 apartment complexes had serious physical deterioration, 215 needed minor repairs, and 50 had conditions that posed a health and safety hazard to tenants.

Operation “Kiddie Care” is still finding a high level of fraud in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). The 22 sponsoring organizations terminated from the program had been receiving \$45.4 million in program funds annually. In 1 Ohio case, 11 persons have been implicated in a conspiracy to illegally obtain more than \$1.1 million in CACFP funds. Nine of the individuals have been indicted, and seven have pled guilty and have been sentenced to as much as 2 years 9 months of incarceration and restitution of \$790,000.

Operation Talon was designed and implemented by OIG to locate and apprehend fugitives, many of them violent offenders, who are current or former food stamp recipients, and was made possible by legislative changes in welfare reform. This nationwide initiative has been expanded to include a total of 42 metropolitan areas in 23 States, and the total number of arrests through Operation Talon has climbed to about 5,600, as a result of joint OIG/State and local law enforcement operations. The fugitives arrested during Operation Talon have included dangerous felons wanted for murder, child molestation, rape, and kidnapping, and over one-third of those arrested were sought in connection with violent crimes or illegal drug activity.

## ■ Office of the Chief Information Officer

The Chief Information Officer is the Department’s senior information technology official. The Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) supports program delivery in USDA by planning, directing, and coordinating the Department’s information and technology resources.

In accordance with the Clinger-Cohen Act of 1996 and similar legislation, regulations, and executive orders, OCIO provides long-range-planning guidance, reviews all major technology investments to ensure that they are economical and effective, coordinates interagency Information Resources Management projects, and promotes information exchange and technical interoperability.

OCIO also provides telecommunications and automated data processing (ADP) services to USDA agencies through its Telecommunications Services and Operations

and National Information Technology Center located in Ft. Collins, Colorado; Kansas City, Missouri; and Washington, DC. Direct ADP services are provided to the Office of the Secretary, Office of the General Counsel, Office of Communications, Office of the Chief Financial Officer, and Executive Operations.

OCIO has oversight responsibilities for the Service Center Modernization Initiative (SCMI), which is the cornerstone of the overall reorganization and modernization effort of the Department. The ultimate goal of the SCMI is to create an environment of one-stop, quality service for customers of the Farm Service Agency, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Rural Development mission area agencies.

## ■ Office of the Chief Financial Officer

The Chief Financial Officer has responsibility for oversight of all financial management activities relating to USDA programs and operations. The Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) directs, manages, provides policy guidance, and coordinates financial management activities and operations. It ensures compliance throughout the Department with applicable accounting standards and principles, and ensures adequate controls over asset management, including cash management operations, real property, equipment, and inventories. Through partnerships, it provides financial management leadership and service to support quality program delivery in the Department.

OCFO is responsible for developing and maintaining an integrated departmental accounting and financial management system which provides complete, reliable, consistent, and timely financial information that is responsive to the needs of program managers. OCFO is also responsible for ensuring auditable financial statements.

OCFO operates the largest automated administrative servicing operation in the Federal Government—the National Finance Center (NFC) in New Orleans, LA. The NFC processes salary and benefit payments for nearly 450,000 Federal employees, performs administrative services for more than 100 Federal departments and agencies, and acts as recordkeeper for the Federal Government's Thrift Savings Plan (TSP). The TSP currently services an \$88 billion account for 2.5 million Federal employees and retiree members.

## ■ Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations

### Office of Congressional Relations

USDA's Office of Congressional Relations serves as the Department's primary liaison with Members of Congress and their staffs, providing information on the Department's legislative agenda, budget proposals, programs, and policies.

## Office of Intergovernmental Affairs

The Office of Intergovernmental Affairs (OIA) works closely with the Nation's Governors and State Commissioners of Agriculture, and other State and local elected officials, on various issues relating to their States. OIA is responsible for disseminating information on programs involving the implementation of USDA policies and procedures applicable to the Department's intergovernmental relations.

OIA participates with the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, and the Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations in the overall planning, formulation, and direction of the activities of the office relating to intergovernmental affairs. OIA serves as the USDA liaison with the White House and other executive branch agencies and departments with respect to intergovernmental affairs.

## American Indian and Alaska Native Programs

The Director of Native American Programs, located in the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, is USDA's primary contact with tribal governments and their members. The director serves as the principal adviser and representative on all matters related to USDA policy and programs which affect and are available to American Indians and Alaska Natives. The director also chairs USDA's Native American Working Group, which reports to the Secretary and provides advice, support, and other assistance to the director. In 1992, USDA adopted an American Indian and Alaska Native policy which guides USDA's interactions with Indian tribes.

USDA provides a wide range of programs and services in all mission areas to American Indian and Alaska Native communities. In recent years, the Department has reached out to inform American Indians and Alaska Natives about USDA programs and services available to them, to deliver programs more effectively to Indian tribes, and to initiate new programs in response to the needs of Indian tribes. In October 1997, USDA published a *Guide to USDA Programs for American Indians and Alaska Natives* to improve tribal communities' access to USDA programs. The guide is also available on the USDA home page at the following address: [www.usda.gov/news/pubs/indians/open.htm](http://www.usda.gov/news/pubs/indians/open.htm)

## ■ National Appeals Division

The National Appeals Division was established in 1994 to conduct impartial administrative appeal hearings and reviews of adverse program decisions made by officers, employees, or committees of designated agencies of the Department of Agriculture.

The World Wide Web address for the division is: [www.nad.usda.gov](http://www.nad.usda.gov)



## ■ The USDA Community Food Security Initiative

**T**he USDA Community Food Security Initiative is seeking to cut hunger in America in half by the year 2015. This initiative is creating and expanding grass-roots partnerships that build local food systems and reduce hunger. USDA is joining with States, municipalities, nonprofit groups, and the private sector to strengthen local food systems by replicating best practices of existing efforts and by catalyzing new community commitments to fight hunger.

### **Goals**

Create new and enhance existing local infrastructures to reduce hunger and food insecurity.

Increase economic and job security by helping low-income people to obtain living wage jobs and attain self-sufficiency.

Bolster food and nutrition assistance by strengthening the Federal nutritional safety net and by increasing the amount of supplemental foods provided by nonprofit groups.

Improve community food production and marketing by aiding projects that grow, process, and distribute food locally.

Boost education and awareness by increasing efforts to inform the public about nutrition, food safety, and food security.

Improve research, monitoring, and evaluation efforts to help communities assess and strengthen food security.

### **Methods**

Catalyze the development of new partnerships on the local, State, and Federal levels to help communities reduce hunger.

Improve the coordination between existing USDA programs—such as nutrition assistance programs, community food grants, ongoing research, farmers' markets, and food recovery projects—and related Federal, State, and community initiatives.

Expand technical assistance to States, communities, and nonprofit groups to build long-term local structures to increase food security.

Increase public awareness of the causes of food insecurity and highlight innovative community solutions to hunger.

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